

REMARKS

35 USC § 112 rejections

The Examiner rejected claims 18 and 24 under 35 USC § 112 for two reasons. Claim 18 is amended to correct an obvious error and this objection should now be moot. The second to claim 24, which, as rightly suggested by the Examiner, should depend from claim 23 and not 18. This error is corrected in amended claim 24 above. The lack of antecedent basis for “the retractable fingers” has been addressed by amending to “the second retractable finger”, for which there is antecedent basis in the claim. The first retractable finger is already specified in claim 23 as being above the stacking area.

Claim 20 is amended in view of the antecedent for “the slot” now provided by the recitation of this feature in claim 18.

35 USC § 102 rejections

The rejection of claims 18, 19 and 22 on the basis that they are anticipated by US 4,050,686 (McCain) is maintained by the Examiner. Explanation is given in the “Response to Arguments” section by the statement “limitation directed towards material or articles worked upon by an apparatus do not further structurally limit the claims. Accordingly, the fact that the sheets of the present invention are folded prior to the adhesive being applied is not considered material.” In order to

distinguish the claims from McCain, claim 18 has been further amended to state that the supporting surface itself comprises “two support surfaces that are inclined with respect to each other and separated at their upper edge by a slot”. The folded sheets are supported in this angled structure “as adhesive is applied from an adhesive applicator to the fold line of selected sheets prior to stacking”.

Basis for this amendment can be found in Figure 5 of the published US application and in the description at paragraph [0032]: “the sheet transport extension 20, which is similar in structure to a saddle, incorporates two low friction support surfaces 21 and 22 which are separated along their upper edge by a slot 40 and are arranged at an angle to each other such that they depend downwardly and outwardly from each other to form a broken inverted V-shape in section”.

The apparatus described by McCain makes use of four printed webs (see Figure 15), whose outputs are stacked to produce a signature. Glue is applied to each web as it is withdrawn from a respective roll, along a centre line that becomes the spine of the book when the signatures are folded to book form. This glue line holds the webs together to form the signature. Not only therefore is the glue applied prior to folding multiple sheets in the apparatus disclosed by McCain, but also it is applied from adhesive applicator 300 as the webs are held flat between a pair of tandem end-to-end pin register belts 292, 293 (see column 5, lines 38 – 40 and Figure 2). There is therefore no supporting surface as such, simply engagement

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between a pair of pin register belts. To the extent that the belts can be considered to form a supporting surface they are not “inclined with respect to each other”. They are in a parallel arrangement in order to hold the web in register and flat, in preparation for glue to be applied substantially midway of the width of each of the webs.

It is clear therefore that claim 18, as amended, and dependent claims are novel with respect to the disclosure of McCain.

35 USC § 103 rejections

The Examiner first rejects claims 18, 19, 23 – 25 as being unpatentable over WO 01/34403 (Cracknell) in view of US 2001/0048862 (Baumann). As acknowledged by the Examiner, Cracknell does not disclose an adhesive applicator. Neither can it therefore disclose a supporting surface that supports the folded sheets as adhesive is applied. Baumann does disclose an adhesive applicator that is arranged to apply adhesive to pre-folded products or signatures after they are stacked. Adhesive is applied as the folded product is transported on a raceway 10. The raceway 10 is a moving belt or chain that transports the folded products through the apparatus. As is apparent in Figure 2, the raceway does not incorporate two support surfaces inclined with respect to each other. The claimed shape provides for better support to

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the opened folded product, in particular as the glue is pressed down between the folds of the product to join one sheet to another.

It accordingly follows that the claimed invention as set out in claim 18 is therefore not obvious over Cracknell in view of Baumann. Dependent claims are similarly inventive by virtue of their dependency.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, the Applicant respectfully requests allowance of all pending claims, and allowance at an early date would be appreciated.

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Should the Examiner have any questions or comments, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone so that any outstanding issues can be expeditiously resolved.

Respectfully submitted,

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